

**Case Study:** Ministries of Jesus

**Location:** Edmond, Oklahoma

**Budget:** \$800,000

**Patient visits in 2010:** 2,700

### **Abstract**

Ministries of Jesus (MOJ) takes the integration of medical and dental care seriously. Creating a part-time dental coordinator position has transformed the dental program. Dedicating staff time to the coordination of the program resulted in the recruitment of new volunteer providers, an increase in patients receiving treatment, and improved ability to secure funding. Over the last two years the program evolved from a monthly night clinic—with only one volunteer dentist—to a robust program providing a suite of services including: cleanings, extractions, fillings, crowns, and dentures to uninsured residents of Oklahoma. Keeping close track of financial information, such as value of service, has successfully demonstrated the impact of the dental program to community leaders and prospective donors.

### **Ministries of Jesus offers faith-based medical and dental care**

Ministries of Jesus (MOJ) provides primary and specialty care to the medically indigent of Oklahoma County and neighboring counties. Founded in 2002, the clinic adheres to a four-part philosophy that addresses the spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical well-being of each patient. New patients meet with an intake counselor who guides them through a self-reported screening process, which evaluates for substance abuse, domestic violence, depression, and anxiety disorders. At this time patients are also made aware that the health care they receive is provided by volunteer medical professionals. Establishing this principle helps to mitigate the no show rate and manage expectations. The clinic has successfully used this model for over 10 years. In addition to primary care, the clinic offers specialty care, counseling services, access to an on-site fitness center, and a robust dental program.

### **Increasing capacity for oral health services**

Ministries of Jesus provided over 300 dental visits in 2010. Services include cleanings, fillings, extractions, crowns, and dentures. The dental clinic is managed by a registered nurse who previously volunteered in the medical clinic and is now the part-time dental coordinator. Dental patients are referred by the medical clinic therefore patients must be screened at the medical clinic before being accepted into the dental program. MOJ provides free, comprehensive dental services, and as a result, once a patient is referred to the dental clinic, MOJ anticipates that each patient will require at least four dental visits in order to receive complete treatment. Most patients who seek dental assistance at MOJ have forgone care due to lack of dental insurance and often suffer from illness related to poor oral hygiene or uncontrolled diabetes. The clinic's overarching goal to fully integrate dental with diabetic care.

Hiring a part-time dental coordinator increased the clinic's ability to recruit oral health professionals and obtain funding for the dental clinic. In 2008—prior to the establishment of the coordinator position—the dental clinic consisted of two volunteers; one dentist and one hygienist. Today there are twenty dedicated oral health volunteers including eight general dentists, one oral surgeon, one TMJ specialist and four hygienists. The dental coordinator works between 20-24 hours per work and is responsible for recruiting volunteers, maintaining the program budget, managing communication with the MOJ referral network, and liaising between medical and dental providers. Dental clinics are held for an average of 6-8 hours per week. Each month at least five volunteer dentists regularly staff the clinic on site and three dentists see clients in their offices, nevertheless there are upwards of 65 individuals waiting to receive treatment.

The dental clinic operated on a budget of \$27,500 in 2011 (for supplies and lab fees). MOJ was able to secure a \$25,000 grant from [Delta Dental Charitable Foundation of Oklahoma](#) for 2011. The clinic keeps close track of costs associated with services provided. MOJ estimates that one patient receives over \$360.00 in retail dental services. The actual price spent per patient is \$147. In 2010, MOJ was able to provide patients with \$106,678 retail dental services. Currently MOJ is projected to increase by 150% of the total amount of services provided in 2010.

### **Recruiting oral health professionals**

MOJ is located on a large church campus, therefore the clinic is widely supported by members of the church who volunteer and contribute financially. The clinic has successfully recruited volunteers by placing articles in the church bulletin in addition to calling area dentists for inclusion in their referral network. However, the most effective method of recruiting volunteers is by word-of-mouth. The value of a provider sharing the experience of volunteering with a colleague or friend is by far the best resource for recruiting new medical and non-medical volunteers.

### **Lessons Learned**

#### **✓ A robust dental program requires an oral health champion**

MOJ's dental clinic started to grow once the clinic committed extra resources and staff time. A full-time or part-time dental coordinator can manage the recruitment of providers, financial tracking, follow up with patients, and establish a dental referral network.

#### **✓ Determine to what extent your clinic is committed to providing oral health care**

Providing oral health care is an expensive—particularly for free clinics. Equipment is costly, services require a certain amount of physical space, and the recruitment of volunteer dentists is challenging. These factors may limit the type of dental services you are able to provide therefore it is important to establish parameters from the outset. Many free clinics only provide extractions

and fillings. Others have been successful at incorporating dental with diabetic care, smoking cessation programs, and oral hygiene education. Make sure you have the resources available before making a commitment.

✓ **Communicate regularly with your dental referral network**

Dental referral networks are convenient for dentists and patients because they can agree on an appointment time. Communicate regularly with the dentists in your referral network to ensure the arrangement is working. MOJ provides a newsletter to all dental professionals in their network to highlight their commitment. MOJ also provides documentation to all dentists in their network. Once a patient is referred by MOJ, a letter is sent to the patient and the dentist outlining specific requirements and limitations under the MOJ agreement of care. This way the patient and the dentist know exactly what to expect and what procedures will take place. This letter also allows the dentist to obtain continuing education credits (in Oklahoma\*) and may be used as a record for income taxes.

\*Check with the [American Dental Association](#) to learn more about state-specific requirements for obtaining continuing education credits.